Rs. 103 crore have been released for implementation of conservation works in 37 lakes. Allocation of fund during the coming year shall be subject to the progress of ongoing projects, utilization of funds released and new proposals to be submitted by the State Governments.

Cancer patients in the country

†*250. SHRI LAXMINARYAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERITILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of cancer patients is increasing in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that cancer medicines are costly and out of reach of common man; and

(c) the measures Government would take to provide these medicines to the common man on reasonable rates?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN):(a) to (c) As per the information available through Population Based Cancer Registry functioning under the National Cancer Registry Programme of Indian Council of Medical Reasearch, it has been estimated that about 7-9 lakhs new cancer cases are detected every year in India. At any given point of time, there are 20-25 lakhs cancer patients in the country. This data does not indicate any significant increase in the overall incidence rate of cancer.

The medicines which have been utilized for treatment of cancer are generally costly and therefore, they are normally out of reach of a common Indian cancer patients. However, it is noted that out of these drugs, only Chemotherapy drugs are generally expensive, while the antibiotics, anti emetics, vitamins, pain killers are not so expensive.

The Government had constituted a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen, Principal Adviser, Planning Commission to explore options other than price control to make available life saving drugs at reasonable prices. The Task Force has recommended access arrangements in case of low volume high prices drugs, which include most of the cancer drugs. The Task Force has recommended that the Government

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

should consider entering into access arrangement with the concerned manufacturers whereby a lower priced medicine can be made available to the common man. Further it was recommended that the cancer drugs should be completely exempted from the levy of the custom duty, excise duty, octroi and other levies, if any. The Task Force also recommended the mechanism for making available the lifesaving medicines free of cost to BPL families.

Further, the Government had earlier constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (PI) was constituted to examine the span of price control (including trade margin) had also recommended special schemes for people below poverty line, introduction of Rajasthan Model of Life Line Fluid Stores (hospital pharmacy stores run by Medicare Societies) for bulk purchase of drugs directly from manufacturer and selling them at reduced prices, which will also assist in reducing the cost of drugs to the common man.

Health being a State subject it is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments to provide treatment to the cancer patients. The Central Government is supplementing the efforts of the State Governments by providing financial assistance for setting up of radiotherapy units in medical colleges/hospitals for providing treatment facilities and recurring grants to most to the recognized regional cancer centers in States for procurement of equipment and for research. The Central Government has set up a National Illness Assistance Fund under Department of Health for providing assistance to poor families for major life threatening diseases. The Central Government is also contributing to the State Illness Assistance Funds in various States for providing treatment to the needy and poor patients under the Rashtriya Aarogya Nidhi. Some of the anti cancer drugs are provided free in the Government institutions. Besides the Central Government employees are covered under CGHS for the purchases of drugs required.

Based on the recommendations of the Task Force and the Committee constituted by this Department, the Government is examining the possibility of introducing a health insurance scheme for BPL families, under which medicines for all diseases including cancer would be provided free of cost (up to a specified amount) to these families. A public- private partnership programme for reducing the cost of anti-cancer medicine is contemplated with the pharma industry and cancer hospitals.